

Nearest Links to Independence--Some Patriots' Children Still Living

Some Surviving Sons and Daughters of Men Who, in Washington's Army, Consummated the Stroke for Liberty

BY JOHN ELFRETH WATKINS.

Upon the eve of this "Glorious Fourth" I have been searching every nook and cranny of the land for those living Americans who can boast of being our nearest links to independence.

I soon found that, although the last surviving signer of the Declaration was with us until 1832, no sons or daughters of signers are now alive. Inasmuch, however, as the last Revolutionary veteran remained among us until 1889, and the last widow of a Revolutionary hero until only five years ago—1906—there loomed a more promising prospect of locating some surviving sons and daughters of men who, under the banner of Washington, shared in the consummation of independence. But at the outset, a quest appeared most discouraging. A magazine writer who two years ago made a census of surviving children of Revolutionary patriots was able to locate but two, one of whom has since died. So there appeared to be extant but one interesting person of this category.

During recent weeks, however, several national officers of both the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution have aided me in locating 192 venerable Americans variously designated on the rolls of these patriotic societies as "actual sons" and "real daughters"—children of men who risked their lives and fortunes for liberty in the arduous days of 1775-1781.

Dying Out Rapidly. That these old ladies and gentlemen—unquestionably our nearest links to independence—are fast dying out is proved by the fact that of 708 "real daughters" enrolled during the past score of years, but 158 survive, and that of 158 "actual sons" received in membership during the same space of time there are but thirty now alive. Of course, this count does not necessarily include all, or nearly all, of the children of Revolutionary veterans still in the land of the living. If the truth were known, it would probably be found that there are alive and kicking about as many "actual sons" as "real daughters." The latter's society has been the more zealous in rounding them up and in offering them substantial inducements to join the organization. So it is safe to say that there are still in the flesh between 300 and 400 men and women whose eyes have feasted on fathers who, under the first American, fought the redcoats of England's third George.

Many pseudo-real and pseudo-actual children of patriots have been brought to light by these searches made by the two patriotic societies, but both organizations have been most scrupulous in separating the sheep from the goats. Out of 250 claimants appearing some time ago in a single State, only about fifty were found, on careful investigation, to be probably bona-fide, and of these only twenty-two were finally enrolled. Of those rejected, some were discovered to be impostors, some "actual sons" of some grandfathers, and some "real daughters" of some grandmothers. The category of children of patriots, therefore, is augmented by the knowledge that the baby girls whom they behind are insured against destruction by the younger generations of the female descendants. The Daughters' society, with a benevolent spirit, free Masonry, long ago pledged herself to this charitable work—day forty-one "real daughters" drawn from the organization a daily pension of \$5, which sums up to the wolf from the door.

Persecution by the Society. If the immortal George and his patriot army, now combed upon yonder shore of the great Gulf, have perceived of mundane conditions, their reality is augmented by the knowledge that the baby girls whom they behind are insured against destruction by the younger generations of the female descendants. The Daughters' society, with a benevolent spirit, free Masonry, long ago pledged herself to this charitable work—day forty-one "real daughters" drawn from the organization a daily pension of \$5, which sums up to the wolf from the door.

Remarkable Longevity. Longevity which the Scriptures ascribe to those who honor their mother and father is and has been by many of these children of

In the 109th year of his age, died last year at Newport, N. H., Bellevue McGregor, son of Private Joel McGregor, who enlisted in John Connecticut Regiment, Continental Line, in 1777, and who was discharged in 1780 after having been held a prisoner of war in New York "sugar house."

One citizen of this venerable category, who can perhaps boast of being the surviving link nearest to George Washington, is the next oldest "real child," Mrs. Samantha Stanton Nellis,



MRS. ELIZABETH ANN FRANK RUSSELL AND MRS. JULIA ANN FRANK DEMARAY, TWIN REAL DAUGHTERS.



MRS. MARY ANN RISHEL.



MISS JANET BLAIR, 97.



MRS. SUSAN S. BRIGHAM, Centenarian "Real Daughter."



MRS. PHOEBE PALMITER, Our last Revolutionary pensioner.



JOHN ADAMS, Aged ninety-seven and a great-great-grandfather.



WILLIAM B. BARRON.



MRS. ILEY L. HILL, 103, Oldest living child of the Revolution.



WELLINGTON A. CLARK, 96.



BEREKAH S. RATHBUN, a Nonagenarian "Actual Son."

three weeks and one day. And the dates for James are upon the official records quite as specific. He was born September 6, 1801, and died March 23, 1910. Between the birth of his father and the date of his own death had stretched a span of 109 years, and the combined ages of this father and son were over 200 years, within which times seven average generations of men dwelt upon earth.

A "real daughter" of 106, Mrs. Rebekah R. Packard, of Covington, Pa., was admitted to the D. A. R. in 1901, but the date of her birth is not recorded. When enrolled she had, living, thirty-two grandchildren, forty-nine great-grandchildren and several great-great-grandchildren. And two other remarkable centenarian "real daughters" were Mrs. Mary McNeely, of Sugar Valley, Ga., who lived to be 104, and whose father saw Cornwallis hand his sword to Washington; also Miss Fannie Meeker, of Newark, N. J., who was 103 when she breathed her last.

There are five centenarian "real daughters" and "actual sons" whose dates of birth have been definitely recorded and whose deaths have not been reported up to present writing.

Oldest Now Alive. The oldest living child of a Revolutionary patriot is, according to these records, Mrs. Iley Lawson Hill, of Lakeport, Cal., who is over 103, having been born in Adams county, O., May 5, 1808. Her patriot father, James Lawson, born in 1769, was seventeen when he enlisted in the War for Independence, and after that struggle was over he fought in the Indian wars.

On her one hundredth birthday, Mrs. Hill's home in California was decorated with flags, bunting and flowers, and she presided at the dinner table, wearing her grandmother's cap, which was over 160 years old. A hundred neighbors, who called to offer their congratulations, formally presented her with a platter on which lay 100 silver dollars.

Daughter of Washington's Bodyguard. One citizen of this venerable category, who can perhaps boast of being the surviving link nearest to George Washington, is the next oldest "real child," Mrs. Samantha Stanton Nellis,

of Naples, N. Y., whose father, Elijah Stanton, was one of the great general's bodyguards. She also traces her descent directly from Thorfin, the Dane, who is in the celebrated Domesday Book. The 161st anniversary of her birth occurred January 5 last.

The oldest "actual son" of the Revolution not yet canceled from the rolls is Edward Joslin, of Keene, N. H., born in the town of Stoddard, that State, April 14, 1810, and therefore over 101. His father was a corporal and his grandfather a captain in the Continental Army.

Two other centenarian "nearest links" are Mrs. Susan S. Brigham, of Worcester, Mass., and William Howe Church, of Bristol, R. I. Mrs. Brigham, who won the century goal on February 3, is the daughter of Ammi Weatherbee, a Massachusetts Minute Man, and Mr. Church, who won the honor of writing his age with three numerals only last week—or on June 23—is the son of Thomas Church, a private in a Rhode Island regiment of light infantry.

And very close indeed to the cen-

tury mark are three children, "real" and "actual," who enter their ninety-ninth years of life while our present calendars are on the wall—William H. Hall, Keene Valley, N. Y., who accomplished this feat February 1; Mrs. Jane Newkirk, Laporte, Ind., and Mrs. Margaret K. Johnson, of Flemington, Ky., who is the last survivor of a Revolutionary veteran's family of sixteen children.

An Indian Patriarch. Doubly entitled to call himself American, because his veins hold the blood both of our empire's aboriginal owners and of its liberators, is the next most ancient link, Sopol Selmore, son of a Passamaquoddy brave, Selmore Sotomah, who, besides rendering various services to the cause of the colonies, distinguished himself in the Revolution as an Indian scout and captain in the marine service. Sopol, his son by his spouse Dandina Moly Selmore, entered his ninety-eighth year March 1, and may well look forward to a century span, for his father, the good Sotomah, was considerably over a hundred years old at the time of his death, upon the eve of our Civil War when Sopol was a middle-aged man of forty-six.

A Great-Great-Grandfather. "He is able to be about and enjoys his four grandchildren, with whom he lives," is the report I got this week from the household of John Adams, of Holden, Mass., who entered his ninety-eighth year May 9.

His great-great-grandson is now two years old," the letter goes on to say of this patriarch, whose father and maternal grandfather were both Continentals. One of the prized relics of the family is his grandfather's wooden quart flask—made like a little keg—which was carried through the Revolution. Mr. Adams and his good wife lived together nearly sixty-seven years and until her death, in 1905. They celebrated their golden wedding in 1880.

One of the near-centenarian "real daughters" who has favored me with her photograph is Miss Janet Blair, of Madison, N. Y., who gave Decoration Day just passed an added touch of patriotism by entering then upon her ninety-eighth year. It has been her recent custom of her chapter sisters on that date to make a pilgrimage to her home, laden with refreshments, including a birthday cake adorned with the figures of her age in red frosting. Her father, Seth Blair, enlisted three times during the Revolution.

Among nine real children of the Revolution who enter their ninety-seventh year in 1911, is Wellington A. Clark, of Crown Point, Ind., whose portrait is also reproduced herewith. His father, Benjamin Clark, one of the Massachusetts patriots who responded to the alarm of April, 1775, shouldered his flintlock and marched from his home in Medway, later working his way up in the ranks from private to sergeant.

Doubly linked to independence, like the aforementioned Mr. Joslin, is William Belshel Barron, of Westminster, Mass., aged ninety-one, whose father and grandfather both fought under the banner of Washington, the former as a private and the latter as a captain. His latest portrait is reproduced in an accompanying column, as is that of Mrs. Mary Ann Rishel, of Clintonville, Pa., who is the daughter of a revolutionary veteran, the sister of an 1812 veteran and the mother of a Civil War veteran. Her father served during five years of the Revolution as a ranger on the frontier, and the \$600 in Continental money which he received for his services was kept many years by his family, in the hope that the government would redeem it. Mrs. Rishel, who celebrated her ninetieth birthday March 23 last, is a child of his third wife. She has a dozen grandchildren and two dozen great-grandchildren. A few years ago her home and its contents were destroyed by fire, but a pension granted her by the D. A. R. has partially alleviated her want. Her chapter lately gave her a Revolutionary flag, which she placed on her father's grave.

Father Born 158 Years Back. Not many men now alive can boast that their fathers were born as many as 158 years ago, but such can be

found in the family records by Beriah Safford Rathbun, of Norwich, Conn., another "actual son," who has favored us with his portrait. The elder Rathbun was a mature man of twenty-three when Philadelphia's old state-house bell "proclaimed liberty throughout the land," and he lived to be eighty-eight, but his son has already beaten his record by three years, for he will reach his ninety-second birthday this fall.

Twin "real Daughters" are the proud boast of the — A. R. Chapter of Cedar Rapids, Ia., these two interesting ladies being Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Russell and Mrs. Julia Ann Demaray, of Lake Odessa, Mich., daughters of John Fuller, of the patriot forces. Last month they were the guests of honor at a meeting of the Michigan State Historical Society. A third "real daughter" of their chapter is Mrs. Euphrasia Smith Grainger, who two years ago came to Washington as alternate for her regent.

Youngest "Real Child." The youngest "real daughter" is said to be Mrs. Mary Ann Scott, of Medway, Mass., who was born December 20, 1851, when her father, Thomas Clapp, a veteran of the Dorchester Heights Guards, was in his eighty-eighth year. He lived to be ninety-four, and she is a child of his second wife.

The youngest "actual son" upon the official list is Cyrus S. Rockwell, of East Dickinson, N. Y., who is sixty-two. Thus, Mrs. Scott has the honor of being the youngest surviving "real child" of the Revolution. When she was born Mrs. Hill, the eldest "real child," was a middle-aged woman in her forty-third year.

Although 180 years have dropped behind since Cornwallis surrendered, we still have one Revolutionary pensioner upon the Federal roll, and Mrs. Phoebe Palmiter, of Brookfield, N. Y., has the distinction of being the last survivor of this class. This old lady, who entered her ninetieth year last December, recently wrote me a letter, from which I will quote a few paragraphs:

Father Ate Raw Corn. "My father's name was Jonathan Woolley. . . . He was born in Swansea, N. H., August 21, 1755, and died in Vermont, July 21, 1848. He enlisted under Colonel Capron, of the Vermont Volunteers, in 1775, at the age of sixteen, and served under Gates and Sullivan. He was at Saratoga at the surrender of Burgoyne, and was at some of the battles that took place at Valley Forge. He was severely wounded in the back, but I do not know at what battle. He suffered many hardships, like the rest. I have heard him tell of Valley Forge, about some one driving in with corn when they were so hungry that they dipped in their old hats and took the corn and ate it as it was.

"I came to New York State in 1839, and was married in December, 1841, to Russell Palmiter. Of this union were born six children, four of whom are living, two sons and two daughters.

"I am a cripple now, having broken my hip nearly seven years ago, and am almost entirely dependent on others to do for me. I am a great sufferer, as I am unable to eat scarcely anything on account of a partially

paralyzed throat, and have to live almost entirely on liquid foods." (Copyright, 1911, by John Elfreth Watkins.)

Durham Social News [Special to The Times-Dispatch.] Durham, N. C., July 1.—Miss Margaret Thomas entertained most delightfully on Tuesday morning in honor of her house guest, Miss Jean Smith, of Baltimore. The house was abloom with sweet peas against a beautiful background of lovely and graceful ferns. After a game of flinch it was the lucky winner of the prize for the highest score which was a beautifully bound copy of "Molly Make Believe." Enjoying the game were Misses Mattie Beall, Lucy Gray Gattling, Mattie Moye Adams May Fallon, Louise Currin, Ruth Fallon, Sarah Erwin, Annie Cobb, Mary Erwin Mary O'Brien, Nannie Green, Sarah Wall, Madeline Knight, Julia Manning.

A lovely affair of Wednesday morning was the party at which Miss Douglas Hill entertained in honor of her house guest, Miss Sadie Blackhall. The pretty home was very attractively decorated with quantities of ferns and flowers. There were four tables of players. The guests were Misses Nellie Fuller, Catherine Fuller, Rosa Green, Rebecca Michie, Placide Kramer, Annie Louise Vaughan, Lida Gribble, Mary Louise Manning, Miss

Miss Josephine Evans, of Chicago, who has been in Raleigh for three years in charge of the domestic science department of the Raleigh public schools, and returned to Chicago permanently. She was quite active in the Woman's Club and other organizations of women in the city, and will be missed in quite a circle of friends.

Many friends here were agreeably surprised Wednesday to learn of the marriage of Rev. James M. Adams, formerly of this city, and Miss Claudia Aycock, of Florence, S. C., the ceremony being at the home of the bride. Mr. Adams is now pastor of the Baptist Church at Hartford, Md.

Little Miss Narcissa Daniels, of Wilson, was given a very charming reception Friday by Little Misses Narcissa and Anna Riddick at the Riddick home in West Raleigh. Little Misses Elizabeth Garden, Elizabeth Brown, Katharine Garden, Randolph Hill, Porathie Park, Katharine Yarbrough and Louise Yates assisted in the entertainment of the sixty-odd guests.

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